

San Nicolas preparing to celebrate 40 years of Status Aparte!



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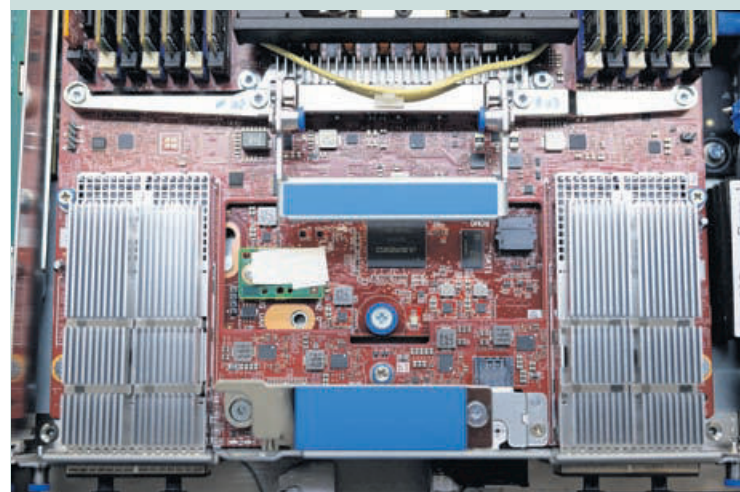
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Texas at heart of Amazon's AI push in United States



Wiring inside the compute sled of a Trainium 2 system is seen at Annapurna Labs in Austin, Texas, on February 3, 2026.

Austin, United States

Tech titan Amazon is working to step out of Nvidia's shadow with custom "Trainium" chips designed specially for machine learning as billions of dollars are poured into artificial intelligence (AI).

Amazon subsidiary Annapurna Labs in Austin, Texas, was testing the longevity of its latest generation Trainium during a recent visit by AFP to the facility. Texas is emerging as a US tech world El Dorado, luring investments with cheap energy, relaxed regulations, tax incentives and reasonably affordable real estate for massive data centers. Amidst a deafening roar, UltraServers packed with 144 of the Trainium AI-accelerator chips were being put through their paces at Annapurna in a routine check prior to delivery.

After years of relying on suppliers for chips, the e-commerce powerhouse's Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud computing unit began designing its own, acquiring Israeli start-up Annapurna Labs in 2015.

First came Graviton and Inferentia chips in 2018, the former for general cloud computing and the latter

for powering AI models.

The first Trainium debuted in 2020, followed by a second generation that touted a big boost in performance. Trainium 3 chips put into action in December are touted as doubling the capabilities of the second generation despite being smaller than a credit card. Kristopher King, head of the Annapurna lab in Austin, contended that the latest Trainium chips can cut the cost of developing and running generative AI models by as much as 40 percent compared to using graphics processing units (GPUs) that are now deemed the "gold standard" for AI.

- Failure not an option -

Along with pricing Trainium chips competitively, AWS is out to make reliability a selling point since data centers need to operate non-stop for long stretches at a time.

AI development requires hundreds of thousands of chips operating simultaneously for weeks, according to Annapurna head of engineering Mark Carroll.

"If there's a failure or unavailability during this phase you have to go back, or even start from scratch," Carroll said.

Unlike other major players in AI processors, AWS doesn't sell its chips.

Instead, AWS uses Trainium exclusively in its own data centers, leasing computing capabilities to customers. AWS opted to customize its chips to harmonize them with its software, particularly a Bedrock platform that lets customers choose from a wide range of competing AI models including Anthropic, OpenAI and other rivals, according to the lab.

Trainium is positioned as a cost-saving option in an AI market considered "supply constrained" because of insatiable appetite for high-performance GPUs from industry leader Nvidia and competitors such as AMD. Even though Trainium 3 is only a few months old, Annapurna is already designing a new generation of the chip.

A launch date for Trainium 4 has yet to be disclosed, but Carroll says it will have six times the processing performance of its predecessor.

As Google, Microsoft, OpenAI, Meta and other tech rivals race to field ever-improved AI models, pressure is intense for chips to make the technology smarter, faster, cheaper and less power-hungry.

Nvidia began manufacturing its industry-leading Rubin graphics processing unit less than a year after the release of then top-of-the-line Blackwell.

The first version of Trainium took about 18 months to create, while the second generation was readied in nine months and Annapurna is "trying to maintain that pace", Carroll said. □

The Wisdom of the Waves: Older Male Humpbacks Take the Lead in the Mating Game



A humpback whale leaps in the waters of the Pacific Ocean at Bahia Malaga Natural Park, Colombia, on August 29, 2025.

In a beautiful testament to the power of experience, new research has revealed that for humpback whales, age is much more than just a number—it is a competitive edge. A groundbreaking study published in *Current Biology* on February 27, 2026, shows that as humpback populations continue their inspiring recovery from the brink of extinction, older male whales are becoming the most successful "suitors" in the ocean.

The Art of the Song

For decades, scientists have been captivated by the complex, haunting melodies of male humpbacks. It turns out these songs are not just innate; they are a refined art form. Researchers from the University of St Andrews found that older males—those roughly 16 years and older—have mastered the "gentle croon" and intricate structures of their mating calls.

This mastery gives them a significant advantage over their younger, less experienced rivals. While younger whales may have the energy, the veterans have the technique, allowing them to better refine their singing and competitive tactics to attract mates.

A Growing, Selective Community

The study, which analyzed nearly 20 years of data from the waters of New Caledonia, highlights a fascinating shift in whale society:

Selective Females: As populations rebound, female whales have become more discerning. They increasingly favor males with the strongest performances and most complex displays, which usually belong to the more mature bulls.

Shift in Paternity: In the early years of recovery, the population was dominated by younger males. Now, with a more balanced age distribution, older individuals are more likely to father calves than ever before.

Strategic Success: Beyond singing, older males are more adept at "escorting"—a behavior where they swim closely with a female to protect their chance to mate.

A Legacy of Resilience

This shift is a direct result of the global ban on commercial whaling. "It is only now, as whale populations recover... that we are beginning to understand how far-reaching the consequences of whaling truly are," says Dr. Franca Eichenberger, lead author of the study. □

The Light in the Window: How “A Cheerful Giver” is crafting a legacy of hope and community

ELIZABETHTOWN, PA — In a world that often moves at a frantic, digital pace, there is a small corner of Pennsylvania where time seems to slow down, signaled by the sweet, nostalgic scent of “Grandma’s Kitchen.” This is the home of A Cheerful Giver, a candle company that has spent over three decades proving that a successful business isn’t just measured by its profit margins, but by the warmth it spreads through its community.

What began as a small family venture in 1991 has blossomed into a national symbol of resilience, American craftsmanship, and, most importantly, the spirit of giving back.

Fragrance with a Heartbeat

At first glance, A Cheerful Giver is known for its high-quality, long-burning Keepers of the Light jar candles. These primitive-style vessels, wrapped in homespun ribbon and topped with rustic black lids, have become staples in homes seeking a cozy, “farmhouse” aesthetic. Their scents—ranging from the spicy notes of “Mama’s Blueberry Cobbler” to the crisp, seasonal “Praline Caramel Sticky Buns”—are designed to evoke memories of home, safety, and comfort. However, the true “magic” of these candles isn’t just in the wax and wick; it’s in the hands that pack them.

A Mission of Inclusion

The most uplifting chapter of the A Cheerful Giver story is their Wick-Clip Program. For years, the company has partnered with community organizations to provide meaningful employment for adults with developmental disabilities. In many industrial settings, individuals with special needs are overlooked, but at A Cheerful Giver, they are the backbone of the operation. These employees are responsible for the intricate task of wicking and clipping the candles before they are poured. This program provides more than just a paycheck; it offers a sense of purpose, a social

community, and the pride of knowing that their work will eventually light up a stranger’s home.

“We don’t just make candles,” one warehouse manager noted. “We build confidence. When you see the smile on a worker’s face as they finish a batch, you realize that this light we’re selling started right here in the warehouse.”

The “Keepers of the Light” Philosophy

The company’s flagship line, “Keepers of the Light,” is more than a catchy name—it is a mission statement. During the challenges of the last few years, when many small businesses were forced to shutter, A Cheerful Giver leaned into its role as a “cheerful giver” by supporting local food banks and community outreach programs.

This commitment to philanthropy is woven into their business model. A portion of the proceeds from their sales often finds its way back into the community, supporting those who are most vulnerable. They operate on the biblical principle from which they take their name: that a heart that gives freely is a heart that remains full.

Preserving American Craftsmanship

In an era of mass-produced, overseas manufacturing, A Cheerful Giver remains a proud practitioner of American-made quality. Each candle is double-wicked to ensure an even burn and maximum fragrance throw, a detail that has earned them a fiercely loyal “fan club” of candle enthusiasts. By keeping their production local, they support American farmers (through their wax blends) and local artisans. This dedication to domestic manufacturing ensures that as the company grows, it pulls its neighbors up along with it.

The Glow of the Future

As A Cheerful Giver looks toward the future, they continue to expand their horizons. From their classic glass jars

to new ceramic collections and flameless fragrance options, they are constantly innovating. Yet, they never stray far from the primitive, rustic roots that made them a household name.

Walking through their facility, the air is thick with the scent of cinnamon and vanilla, but the atmosphere is defined by something much lighter: joy. In every box that leaves the dock, there is a piece of the Pennsylvania spirit—a reminder that even in dark times, a single flame can provide comfort, and a single company can provide hope. The next time you strike a match to light a “Cheerful Giver” candle, take a moment to enjoy more than just the scent. Know that the light dancing in your liv-



For over 20 years, CODI has proudly partnered with A Cheerful Giver, where our differently-abled individuals wick every candle with care.

ing room is a reflection of a worker who found a purpose, a family that stayed true to its values, and a community that is burning a little brighter because of them. □



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Flights to evacuate stranded travellers in Middle East

Paris, France

Governments and airlines scrambled Tuesday to repatriate tens of thousands of travellers stranded in the Middle East following the eruption of a regional conflict sparked by Israel-US strikes on Iran.

Countries across the region shut their airspace as Iran retaliated against US allies, Qatar saying it had blocked an attack on its airport, one of the major hubs in the region.

At least 12,903 flights were cancelled between Saturday and Monday -- 40 per cent of planned departures, according to aviation data analysis firm Cirium, which estimated more than one million passengers had been affected so far.

- Slow resumption -

On Sunday, nearly all flights were cancelled out of the United Arab Emirates, home to Dubai airport, the second-largest in the world in terms of passengers. The cancellation rate fell to 93.5 percent on Monday after Dubai -- and Abu Dhabi's airport -- resumed limited operations.



Some Emirates flights took off Tuesday morning, according to the Flightradar24 flight tracking website, flying south out of the Gulf region. Low-cost flydubai and Russia's Aeroflot were also said to be operating.

Flights continued to come in and out of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Oman, though no civilian flights passed through airspace over Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Libya or Qatar. Israel said its airspace would gradually reopen from Wednesday night, initially just for flights repatriating nationals.

- Evacuations -

European countries including the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania were quick to organise an airlift of their countrymen. Hundreds of passengers landed back in Prague on two planes on Tuesday morning, with around 100 Slovaks arriving and more than 300 Romanians returning via Egypt.

Italians were set to arrive in Rome and Milan on three flights.

Russia said it had picked up nationals who had fled from

Iran to Azerbaijan, as well as a few dozen who were in Egypt.

The United States said it was helping to arrange charter flights from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- adding that more than 9,000 people had already made it back from the region since Saturday.

France is among the most affected Western nations, with an estimated 400,000 nationals in the region. French President Emmanuel Macron said Tuesday two flights were on their way to

Paris with the first groups to be repatriated. Other European countries were following suit.

Germany said a charter flight would leave Oman on Wednesday with some of the estimated 30,000 Germans stranded in the region, and travel firm TUI started to fly home holidaymakers stranded on two of its cruise ships in the Gulf via Dubai.

Britain said a charter flight would bring home nationals from Oman in the coming days, with Ireland and Spain making similar announcements.

Airlines were playing a part too. Three Indian carriers -- IndiGo, Air India Express and Akasa Air -- said they would be running evacuation flights.

British Airways said it had scheduled a flight from Oman on Thursday.

- Suspended operations -

Airlines including Air France, British Airways, LOT, Norwegian and SAS have all suspended flights to the Middle East for the coming days. Finnair has halted flights to Doha and Dubai until nearly the end of the month. □

2017 implosion of Argentine submarine was 'foreseeable,' trial hears



Río Gallegos, Argentina - The submarine implosion that killed 44 Argentine sailors in November 2017, the

country's worst naval disaster since the Falklands War, was "foreseeable," prosecutors argued as the trial

over the disaster got underway Tuesday.

The sinking of the ARA San Juan, in circumstances that remain unclear, was "a foreseeable outcome given the condition of the vessel, which made the shipwreck possible," the prosecution said in the indictment against four former Navy officers, who went on trial in the Patagonian city of Río Gallegos.

The ARA San Juan went missing a week after it set off from Ushuaia on Argentina's southern tip and was returning to its home port

at the Mar del Plata naval base.

The vessel's crushed wreckage still lies deep on the sea bed in a remote area of the South Atlantic off Santa Cruz province, where the trial is taking place.

The submarine vanished on November 15 after reporting that seawater had entered the ventilation system, causing a battery on the diesel-electric vessel to short-circuit and start a fire. Four former Navy officers -- former Training Command chief Luis Lopez Mazzeo, former Submarine Force

commander Claudio Villamide, the Submarine Command's former chief of staff Hector Alonso and former head of operations Hugo Correa -- have been charged with dereliction of duty and aggravated negligent destruction.

They face between one and five years in prison if convicted.

- 'Felt like nobodies' -

None of the families of the victims -- 43 men and one woman -- attended the start of the trial in remote Río Gallegos. □

Before dawn, ancient drum rite wakes Istanbul faithful to fast

Istanbul, Turkey

It's 3:30 am and lights are slowly coming on in the homes lining a narrow Istanbul street as people are woken up by the rhythmic thump of a drum.

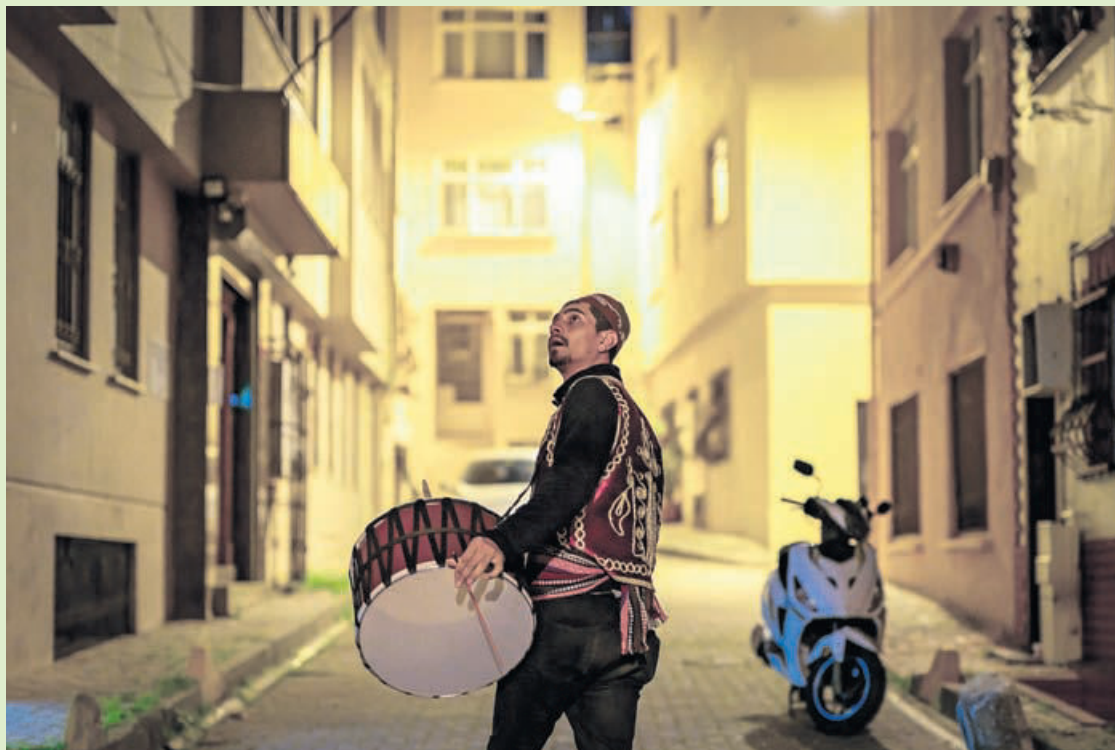
Emerging onto a balcony, Sibel Savas and her grandson look down as the drummer -- or davulcu in Turkish -- wanders through the Ayvansaray neighbourhood, his drumbeat waking the faithful for a last meal before the daily Ramadan fast begins at sunrise.

For the past 55 years, Hakan Ozbingol has got up at 3:00 am every day during Ramadan to play his davul, a large double-headed drum carried with a strap and played while walking through the streets.

He inherited the role from his father, with whom he started venturing out when he was 10.

Although their nightly sortie is purely voluntary, local residents traditionally give a tip at the end of the month, says Ozbingol, who is now 65.

If once this amounted to enough to buy the children a nice gift, these days it's barely enough "to buy them clothes or to cover



Turkish drummer plays drum and sings traditional songs in the streets of Istanbul, to wake Muslims up for the sahur, the Ramadan meal eaten at night, on February 24, 2026.

the bills", he sighs, as people struggle to cope with Turkey's bitter economic crisis.

But for him, it's not a job but more of a sacred duty.

"As long as it's to do with Allah, this drum will never fall silent. We're doing Allah's work, it's our duty," he said hoarsely, trudging with bent back through the winding streets.

- Ottoman roots -

According to Harun Korkmaz, a music historian at Istanbul University, the Ramadan drum rite "dates back to the end of the 19th century" when the Ottoman military bands, or mehters, performed several times a day, setting the pace of daily life.

"The davulcu are continuing this tradition," he told AFP of a tradition that began in Istanbul and spread to the rest of the country.

As well as drumming, "real" davulcu will also chant "mani", or short rhythmic poems, under people's windows to flatter a sleepy audience, Ozbingol explained.

"In Turkey, there are few davulcus who know how to sing mani. It's not enough to pick up the drum and bang on it while walking around," he said, proudly tapping his temple to show where he keeps this knowledge.

The tradition began in the Fatih district near Istanbul's historic peninsula, and most of today's Ramadan drummers come from Turkey's Roma community, who today number around 2.7 million, research figures show. As the davulcu walks the street where washing lines vie for space with Turkish flags draped from the high facades of the buildings, he is warmly greeted by a pensioner called Zafer, who is also a musician.

"If the Roma weren't here there would be nothing. They are the musicians and Istanbul's Ramadan drummers," the 71-year-old told AFP.

- 'A tradition that must not die' -

Still holding her grandson, Sibel Savas says she has no alarm clock and relies on the early-morning drum rite to wake her up.

"This tradition is important to us this. It comes from our ancestors," she told AFP.

In a nearby street, another drummer, 58-year-old Yurdaer, is trying to play a little more quietly as he passes the home of an elderly neighbour who has heart problems. □

Bolivia's indigenous communities lead Amazon conservation surge

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA – In a powerful victory for the planet, Bolivia's indigenous communities are proving that the most effective way to save the Amazon is to let those who have lived there for millennia lead the way. Through a recent wave of local initiatives, nearly one million hectares (2.2 million acres) of rainforest and Andean highlands have been newly protected, creating vital corridors for wildlife and securing the future of traditional livelihoods.

A New Wave of Protection

While national-level conservation has slowed, local governments and indigenous groups are stepping up: Four New Protected Areas: Established in early 2026, these areas—roughly the size of Yellowstone National Park—connect larger national parks and allow species like the jaguar, har-

py eagle, and Bolivian river dolphin to migrate safely.

The Power of Autonomy:

The Loma Santa region recently became the first indigenous-managed protected area in the Bolivian Amazon. Spanning an area the size of Maui, it is now a sanctuary for five indigenous nations, including the Tsimané and Mosaicén.

Securing Ancestral Lands:

In August 2025, the Tacana people finally received formal titles to over 670,000 acres of forest after a 20-year struggle, ensuring legal protection against illegal logging.

Science Confirms: Traditional Knowledge Works

Data consistently shows that forests managed by indigenous peoples are healthier than those under private or even state control.

Lower Deforestation:

Research in the Western Amazon found that deforestation rates are two to three times lower in indigenous territories than in unprotected areas.

Climate Resilience:

Indigenous groups like the Tacana and Lecos have implemented water management and agroforestry projects that help their communities survive extreme droughts and floods intensified by climate change.

Youth & Women Leaders:

Groups like JUMA (Youth United for the Environment) are training the next generation to use digital monitoring tools alongside traditional knowledge to patrol their lands.

The Economy of Conservation



Aerial view of a Brazil nut tree in the Amazon rainforest near Luz de America, Bolivia, taken on February 14, 2023.

For these communities, protecting the forest isn't just about the environment; it's about survival. By safeguarding the "standing forest," they support sustainable industries like Brazil nut and açai harvesting, which provide stable incomes without destroying the ecosystem.

"The past was deforestation," says Ericka Cortez, a community leader involved in the new reserves. "The present is conservation." As the world looks for solutions to the climate crisis, the indigenous nations of Bolivia are offering a hopeful, time-tested blueprint for a greener future. □

Underground party scene: Israelis celebrate Purim in air raid shelters

Tel Aviv, Israel

As the sun set in the coastal Israeli city of Tel Aviv on Monday, air raid sirens warning of incoming Iranian missiles sent residents hurrying to shelters just as the Jewish holiday of Purim was starting.

All public gatherings have been banned by military order, but four floors underground in the basement parking lot of a Tel Aviv mall, hundreds of young people gathered in costume, as is customary for the festive holiday -- typically marked by gift-giving and lots of alcohol.

Purim, which celebrates the Jewish people's rescue from a Persian extermination plot as recounted in the Book of Esther, held a different meaning this year for Israelis after Iran launched strikes in retaliation for an Israeli-US attack on the Islamic republic that began on Saturday.

Maxim Green, 28, said he heard about the car park celebration on the WhatsApp group of his synagogue.

"It's really crazy that it's happening at this time, this war. Because it really does have some similarities with the Purim story. You have an evil regime who wants to topple the Jewish people," he said.

Cowboys, a Peter Pan, a Pikachu and a flight at-



A young Jewish girl wearing a costume for Purim celebrations, look on at a building struck by a projectile in Bnei-Brak, just east of Tel Aviv on March 3, 2026.

tendant wearing a sign that said "Tel Aviv-Tehran, status: boarding" all stood around a rabbi reciting the Megillah, a passage of the Bible traditionally read for the holiday.

Ethan Cohen, a 26-year-old tech worker who spent part of his day volunteering to clean up debris at the impact site of an Iranian missile, told AFP he came to hear the Megillah and then start partying.

"I wanted to celebrate Purim, and, you know, it's a very meaningful holiday, especially... considering what's currently happening in the world."

As in normal years, worship-

pers booed and waved noisemakers each time the story's antagonist, Haman, was announced, before drinking and dancing to pop music despite the unusual setting.

The mall's underground parking lot, which serves as a shelter when incoming projectiles are detected, was empty of cars, many of its spots instead filled with tents.

- 'One day at a time' -

Some people, like Anna Shilanski, are choosing to spend their nights underground to avoid having to wake up and rush downstairs when air raid sirens

wail in the wee hours.

Though a bit surprised by the crowd, the 32-year-old welcomed the celebration, setting up a tea spot for those also staying in the shelter.

"I'm really happy that people have a place to do this," she told AFP between her table of refreshments and the green camping tent she shares with her mother, stepbrother, and his mother.

"At some point, I think everyone's going to go to sleep, and before that, we're going to have a cup of tea," she said, adding that "when people are

stressed, they like to feed people".

Asked how long she thought the war would last, she said she was "taking it one day at a time, not expecting anything soon".

For some partygoers, the basement's low ceilings eventually became uncomfortable, and they decided to leave through the car's exit ramp to get some fresh air in the quiet streets. Other underground shelters, including level -3 of the same mall, also held Purim gatherings.

But some rabbis turned to online video readings of the Megillah in order to follow army orders while still respecting the religious requirements of the holiday. Anat Shamir, a 70-year-old retiree sleeping on the opposite side of the parking lot to the Purim celebration, said she was getting used to staying underground and felt Israel's action in Iran was worth her discomfort.

A staunch supporter of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, she said she was confident in Israel's capacity to reach its war goals.

"We have to do it. Otherwise, they kill us," she said from her mattress, which was neatly arranged between the parking spot's painted lines.□



Programmes coordinator of the Science in a Suitcase project, Jeremiah Kithinji, (R) instructs his students on how to assemble the Lego mindstorms EV3 robot, at the Sweetwaters Primary and Junior School in Nanyuki, Laikipia county on January 27, 2026.

Kenya

Jeremiah Kithinji had never touched a computer before he finished high school. A decade later, he is teaching robotics, and even took a team of rural Kenyans to the World Robotics Olympiad in Singapore.

Robotics build path from rural Kenya to world stage

In a classroom in Laikipia county -- a sparsely populated grasslands region of northern Kenya known for its rhinos and cheetahs -- pupils are busy snapping together wheels, motors and sensors to assemble a robot.

Guiding them is Kithinji, 27, who runs a string of robotics clubs in the area that have taken some of his pupils far beyond the rural landscapes outside.

In November, he took a team of three to Singapore for the Olympiad, where he also served as the competition's first Kenyan judge. They presented a simulated space mission with a robot that could launch a model satellite and collect space debris.

Singapore was an eye-opening

experience for Kithinji, who was educated in a modest rural school without access to computers.

"I felt this country is so advanced. Interacting with the people showed me how much they care about their nation, and it made me think about how I can instil the same mindset in my students," he told AFP.

Kenya has pushed science and engineering in its latest curriculum, but lacks the resources for robotics training.

The clubs in Laikipia, which reach around 200 pupils, are funded by a US nonprofit, Science in a Suitcase, which helped train Kithinji and funded the trip to Singapore. They have inspired Natalia Wangari, 14.

"In the future, when I become a

neurosurgeon, I won't have to perform every surgery myself. I can build a robot that acts as a doctor. I'll just need to code it, and it will do the surgery itself," she told AFP.

- Robots adapted to Kenya -

Kithinji hopes robotics can provide solutions to some of Kenya's specific challenges.

He previously coached a team at the African Olympiad in South Africa in 2024, where they designed agricultural robots that can operate farming tools and irrigate fields, and sees particular benefits for rural hospitals -- assisting in surgeries and delivering medication. He dreams of more support and collaborators to expand his robotics programme across the country.□



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New appearance of famous anchor in Seroe Colorado raises questions on social

(Oranjestad)—On Sunday, several posts surfaced on social media from both locals and tourists showing that the anchor located at the entrance of Colony — famous for its red color — is currently undergoing maintenance and has been painted blue to represent the flag of Aruba.

When the photos surfaced, many in the comments began asking questions about what this development could mean, with some expressing concern about whether the color the anchor was famous for would be permanently removed.

Many noted that the change is meant to commemorate 40 years of Aruba's Status Aparte, which will be celebrated this month together with Anthem and Flag Day. According to some comments, the anchor will get its red paint back after March 18.

According to Mr. Hilario Doncker — a well-known voice in the Aruban community — explaining on Facebook, the blue color is indeed for the celebration of 40 years of Status Aparte, as well as the fact that this year Charlie's Bar is celebrating 85 years of existence.

He further explained that in 2005 he painted the anchor red because it was the favorite color of his late father, Charles Brouns Jr., to whom

the anchor is dedicated. A user — son of Charles Brouns Jr. — added that one of his father's goals was to put a spotlight on San Nicolas. After the refinery closed in 1986, it was clear that another economic pillar would be needed in the district, and so the red anchor monument became a well-known site for locals and tourists alike.

As for the change in appearance, however, it could not be verified whether the anchor will be painted red again, and according to Doncker, there will apparently be a press conference before March 18 to address this topic.

San Nicolas preparing to celebrate 40 years of Status Aparte

The new appearance of the anchor is not the only development taking place in the district of San Nicolas in recent weeks.

The government announced in a public statement yesterday the latest cultural developments taking place in preparation for celebrating 40 years of Status Aparte and 50 years of the Anthem and Flag. This includes a new mural dedicated to local artist Julio Bernardo Euson, who represented Aruba internationally and received recognition on the global stage.

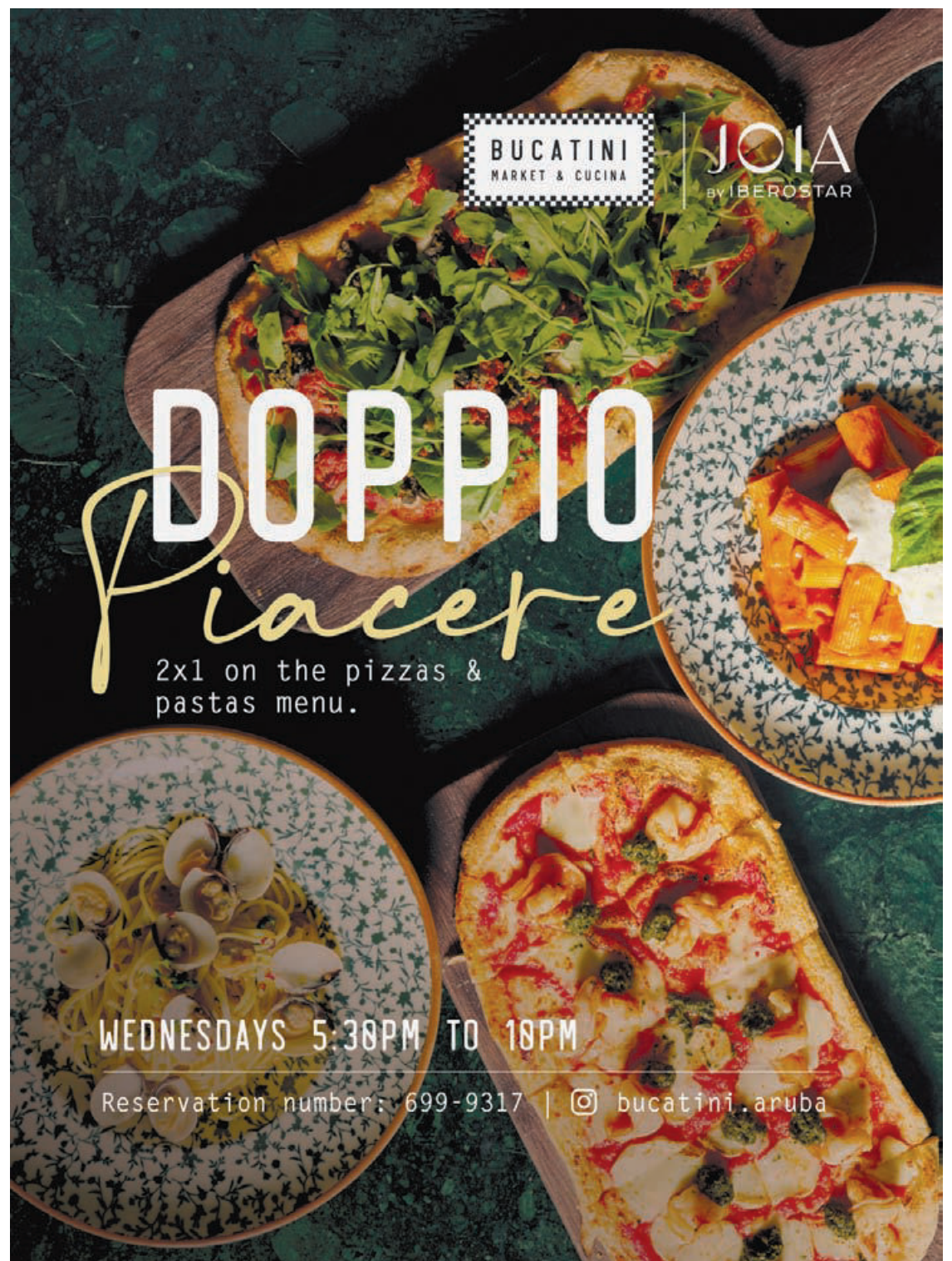
According to the statement, this year marks an ideal moment to give recognition to local talent that carries Aruba's name with pride on the world stage. The mural is located on the Chocolate City building and forms part of a broader cultural environment, the statement said, which will include exhibitions and activities highlighting Euson's legacy.

Prime Minister Mike Eman pointed out that Euson is an artist of great importance to the island, although many may not know his story and the impact he had on our culture. "He is an artist who has won more international awards than any other Aruban. His music is part of the soul of Aruba," he indicated.

Editor's note: Some photos are by Hilario Doncker and



Nancy Gallagher on Facebook. □



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CAYA Introduces a Bold New Menu Celebrating Latin Caribbean Flavors



(Oranjestad)—CAYA, one of Aruba's most beloved dining destinations, continues to celebrate the vibrant essence of Latin Caribbean cuisine with an exciting new menu that beautifully balances tradition and innovation.

Nestled in a beautifully restored traditional Aruban Cunucu house, surrounded by lush tropical greenery, CAYA offers guests a dining experience that feels both authentic and contemporary. The restaurant's philosophy is simple yet profound: to create a space where the warmth of island hospitality meets the creativity of modern gastronomy.

The new menu reflects this vision with a series

of inspired dishes that showcase the diversity of Caribbean and Latin American flavors. From Cuba to Colombia, and from Aruba to Mexico, each plate tells a story rooted in heritage and reimagined through CAYA's modern lens.

Among the standout new appetizers are the **Tuna al Tamarindo**, featuring thinly sliced tuna sashimi served with tamarind leche de tigre, creamy avocado, marinated onions, radishes, cilantro, and crispy tortillas dusted with *tajín*; and the **Beef Stew Croquettes**, a playful nod to Caribbean comfort food, served with truffle and black garlic mayonnaise. Guests can also savor the **Beef and Pork Brochetas**, made with locally smoked bacon, *Madam Jeannette* peppers, local honey, and tenderloin, grilled to perfec-



tion and served with *chimi-churri espuma*.

The main courses bring equal excitement. Highlights include the **Chilean Sea Bass**, pan fried and served with a smooth carrot and *ají amarillo* sauce, creamy garlic mashed potatoes, grilled paksoi and broccoli, hearts of palm, toasted cashews, and a fragrant lime leaf vinaigrette. Another showstopper is the **Duck and Rice**, a Caribbean interpretation of a Peruvian classic, featuring pan fried duck breast with aromatic green rice infused with local herbs, kombucha, and *ají amarillo*, finished with a pan fried egg and *sarsa criolla*.

Dessert lovers are in for a treat as well. The **Caribbean Black Forest** reimagines the classic with a tropical twist, featuring a rich brownie served with red fruit, coconut mousse, chocolate, and banana rum ice cream. The **Merengon Tropical** delights with sage panna cotta, mango and pineapple compote, mango sorbet, and citrus meringue.

Guests can also enjoy CAYA's new *Sabor Experience*, a limited time three course menu priced at \$79, allowing diners to explore an appetizer, main course, and dessert of their choice.

To complete the experience, CAYA hosts live music every Sunday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., setting the perfect backdrop for an evening of island charm and culinary artistry.

CAYA continues to invite locals and visitors alike to experience the heart of Aruba, where Latin Caribbean heritage comes alive in every dish, every note of music, and every heartfelt welcome. □



“Aruba to me is a fairytale”

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from Laura & Nicholas Najjar from Medford, Massachusetts.

They wrote to us saying: “Aruba to me is a fairytale: Once Upon a Time and Happily Ever After”

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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Infini Launches New Menu 14 Following Its Five-Year Anniversary Celebration



Infini has officially launched Menu 14, a special edition menu unveiled in celebration of the restaurant's five-year anniversary. The new menu revisits guests' favorite dishes from the past five years, blending nostalgia with fresh interpretations inspired by Infini's signature approach to modern gastronomy.

Infini stands for limitless possibilities, and Menu 14 perfectly embodies that philosophy. Crafted by Chef Urvin Croes, the menu celebrates innovation, creativity, and fearless exploration. Known for pushing boundaries through storytelling, technique, and flavor, Chef Urvin continues to redefine Aruba's fine dining scene. Infini's immersive chef's table concept invites guests to interact directly with the culinary team, transforming each dish into a chapter of an evolving narrative.

Before opening Infini, Chef Urvin honed his craft in Aruba's most prestigious hotel restaurants, rising from ap-

prentice cook to Sous Chef, and gaining international experience at the Michelin-rated Grand Hotel Karel V in Europe. His mission has always been to position Aruba as a leading culinary destination by reimagining local recipes with modern techniques and artistic precision. Dedicated to supporting local farmers and producers, Chef Urvin incorporates homegrown ingredients that reflect the island's rich food culture. His collaborations with these artisans are essential to Infini's distinctive culinary identity.

With numerous awards to his name—including being crowned the first-ever Iron



Chef Aruba—Chef Urvin remains grounded in his passion, curiosity, and love for sharing Aruba's story through food.

Menu 14 invites diners to taste, explore, and rediscover Infini's journey while looking forward to the limitless possibilities ahead. Reservations are highly recommended to experience this new chapter in Infini's evolving culinary story. □

Fun facts about cacti hedges “Trankera”

(Oranjestad) – When off-roading in inland Aruba, you may notice some cacti hedges around various properties or lined up by certain pathways. These man-made hedges are called “trankera” and play an important role in maintaining our flora and fauna.

The trankera dates to colonialism, where settlers established several ‘cunucu’ (farm) on the island. People either used stone walls or trankera as a fence to ward off strangers and wild animals that can feed on the cunucu vegetation or cattle.

Nowadays, trankeras are less common, and those that still stand are often not maintained. On the surface this seems like a bad development, however this proved to be beneficial for our flora and fauna. Naturally developed flora around the hedges offers more shelter for fauna. Another aspect is the propagation process. When pruning hedges, flowers and seeds were removed, which limits propagation to a minimum.

So, though trankeras don't play that big of a



role in Aruba's agriculture anymore, our environment still reaps the benefits of these long-standing natural structures. □



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Episode CCCXLIII- 343

Hidden Networks: The Secret Life of Aruba's Desert Plants

Etnia Nativa explores the indigenous heritage and external influences that shaped the Aruba we know today. It honors the ancestral wisdom passed down by the island's first inhabitants—survival skills, medicinal plant knowledge, practical crafts, astronomical navigation, and the reading of weather patterns. Preserved across generations, these traditions continue to shape Aruba's cultural identity, affirming an enduring bond between the island, its original people, and the land itself.

In this new episode, Etnia Nativa reveals that beyond the island's arid landscape lies the living wisdom of Aruba's native plants—hidden networks of communication and connection that sustain and ensure their survival.

Aruba's landscape may seem rugged and sun-scorched at first glance, but beneath its windswept terrain lies a world of remarkable botanical intelligence and resilience. Much like forests connected through underground fungal networks elsewhere in the world, Aruba's native plants are part of subtle ecological partnerships that allow life to flourish in one of the Caribbean's driest climates.

Though scientists often describe the famous "Wood Wide Web" in temperate forests, similar underground collaborations occur in dry ecosystems. Many of

Aruba's native plants form symbiotic relationships with soil fungi and microorganisms that help them absorb scarce nutrients and retain precious moisture. In return, the plants provide sugars produced through photosynthesis. In a land where rainfall is limited and unpredictable, cooperation is key to survival.

Despite its semi-arid climate, Aruba is home to extraordinary native species uniquely adapted to heat, wind, salt spray, and drought. The iconic Divi-divi tree, permanently shaped by the trade winds, is more than a visual symbol of the island. Its deep and spreading root system stabilizes soil and seeks underground moisture, while its small leaflets reduce water loss. The tree's curved silhouette tells a silent story of adaptation to constant environmental pressure.

Towering above the landscape, the Cadushi, a candelaber cactus demonstrates another survival strategy: water storage. This columnar cactus stores moisture in its thick, fleshy stems, allowing it to endure long dry periods.

At night, it opens its pores to reduce water evaporation, a process known as CAM photosynthesis—an ingenious adaptation to desert life.

The hardy Acacia, or Hubada, and the Mesquite, or Kwihi, along with the Kibrahacha—which bursts into brilliant yellow blooms after rainfall—reveal another strategy for survival. Our native shrubs, such as Basora Preto, Beishi, Seida, and Yerba Sinki, demonstrate similar resilience.

Timing is another strategy. Some plants remain dormant during prolonged drought, then rapidly leaf out or flower when rain finally arrives, taking swift advantage of brief wet periods.

Life in Aruba's dry climate demands root diversity as well. Some species develop deep taproots that reach hidden groundwater reserves, while others spread shallow root systems that quickly absorb rain before it evaporates under the intense Caribbean sun. This combination of strategies ensures that every drop of water is utilized.

Plants also communicate distress. When grazed upon or stressed by drought, certain species release chemical signals into the air—subtle warnings that may prompt neighboring plants to activate defensive mechanisms. Though invisible to us, this chemical conversation helps sustain fragile ecosystems.

Aruba's flora teaches us that resilience is not about isolation, but about connection. Beneath the island's rocky soil lies a quiet network of cooperation, adaptation, and survival. What appears at first to be a sparse desert is, in reality, a finely tuned living system—one in which every root, fungus, and leaf plays a role in sustaining life against the odds: shrinking ecosystems, unchecked development, garbage accumulation, hazardous chemicals used by pest control enterprises, and many other threats that thrive under the radar. □



This new episode of Island Insight is presented by Etnia Nativa—a portal to the living heart of Aruba's ancestral history. Built entirely from recycled materials and nestled just meters from the island's hotel district, its discreet presence is part of its charm. Etnia Nativa stands as a hidden sanctuary where heritage can be peacefully experienced, far from the hustle and bustle of conventional tourism. Visits are by appointment only.

WhatsApp +297 592 2702
etnianativa03@gmail.com

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called 'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa'



and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban

Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Tortuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushirib-

ana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba



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By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

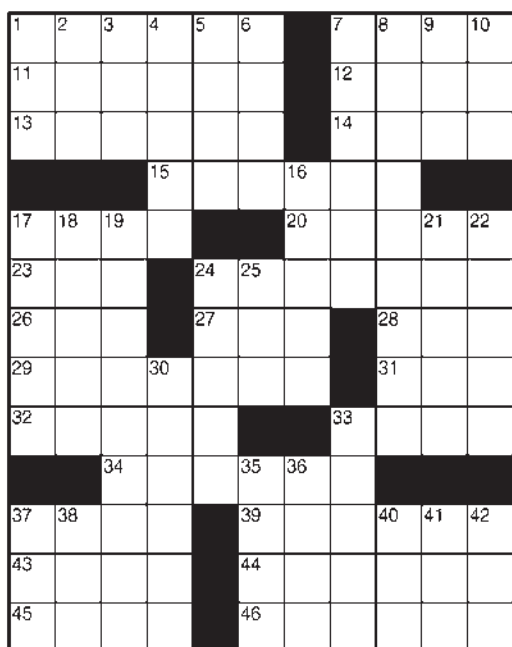
- 1 Wage conflict, maybe
7 Basics
11 Relaxed
12 Detective's find
13 Nasty fellow
14 Gift-wrapping need
15 Pesto ingredient
17 Luggage
20 Egyptian crosses
23 Mess up
24 Typographical symbol
26 Sheltered side
27 Hole in one
28 Compass dir.
29 Infant outfits
31 Cut off
32 Declines
33 Singer Redding
34 Texas university
37 Smooth
39 Soft wool
43 Powder base
44 Egyptian beetle
45 Poker payment
46 Principles

DOWN

- 1 Grier of "Jackie Brown"
2 Had a nosh
3 Supporter's vote
4 Sides in turf wars
5 China setting
6 Jury member
7 Stage work
8 Karate award
9 Recipe unit
10 Notice
16 Bowling spots
17 Submerged
18 Concert site

ORBIT MINOR
VIOLA ADORE
ADOLLSHOUSE
LET LIL NOD
CORES
SHREW RHINO
PAIL IRAN
AMPE DRAPE
BEGOT
SOB NEO RIO
THEWILD DUCK
INNER ARBOR
RODEO HYENA

- 19 Parks around a city
21 Asian capital
22 Dance units
24 Dagwood's dog
25 Sculpting medium
30 Spooky gathering
33 Heart, for one
35 Ultimate
36 In the past
37 Greek vowel
38 Moving truck
40 Iron source
41 Mob pariah
42 Crunch targets



3-15

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-15 CRYPTOQUOTE

UJG FTX K CKOO NKJF VPG

EKBPV CUEFD, TJF VPGX

CKOO RG DKSAOG. — ITHW

WGEUZH

Cryptoquote: WE LOVE BECAUSE IT'S THE ONLY TRUE ADVENTURE. — NIKKI GIOVANNI

Cruise ship Schedule: March 03-06 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	03	CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	B	1
		SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR	10.30	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	I	1
WED	04	BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	****	B	1
		AMBASSADOR SHIP 3	09.00	18.00	C	1
		BRILLIANT LADY	10.00	22.00	I	1
THU	05	BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS - Dept.	****	18.00	B	-
		MAJESTIC PRINCESS	07.00	16.00	C	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	18.00	I	1
FRI	06	CARNIVAL GLORY	09.00	22.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

9					4	6		
	5		6		3	7		
	7			8				
2	4		7	5	9	1		
				1				9
				3			7	5
4	9				8	3	5	
	3		1		8	2		
5		2	3		7	9		

Difficulty: ★★★

3/4

Answer to previous puzzle

6	8	7	9	5	4	2	1	3
5	4	1	3	7	2	9	8	6
2	3	9	8	6	1	7	4	5
4	7	6	5	8	3	1	2	9
8	5	3	1	2	9	4	6	7
1	9	2	7	4	6	5	3	8
9	6	4	2	3	7	8	5	1
3	1	8	4	9	5	6	7	2
7	2	5	6	1	8	3	9	4

Difficulty: ★★

3/3

Second-hand phones surf rising green consumer wave



Kaiwei Tang, CEO and Co-founder of Light, poses with a Light Phone III during an AFP interview at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the world's biggest mobile technology showcase and fair in Barcelona on March 3, 2026.

Barcelona, Spain

The second-hand market for smartphones has surged in recent years, borne up by lower prices as well as interest in eco-friendly consumption even as some still fear buying a dud.

The success of refurbished phones is a reminder that flashy new gadgets and cutting-edge capabilities, on show this week at Barcelona's Mobile World Congress (MWC) telecoms trade fair, are not the only engines of the sector.

Around 46 percent of Europeans have already taken the plunge by buying a second-hand device, marketplace Recommerce found in a 2025 survey commissioned from pollsters Kantar. But the picture varies around the world, as "mature markets in Europe and parts of North America tend to show

higher refurbished uptake", according to a report from analysis firm Mordor Intelligence, which estimates the second-hand market at 10 percent of worldwide phone purchases annually.

Western consumers "are increasingly aligning with circular-economy principles, prioritizing lifecycle extension and reducing electronic waste" as environmental concerns permeate public debate, the authors wrote. Meanwhile "several emerging markets remain predominantly new device driven".

- Price and planet -

Price remains the killer argument for refurbished phones, with second-hand models sometimes half as expensive as a factory-fresh alternative, attracting consumers who have seen purchasing power ground down by inflation. □

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Surinam	582 7896

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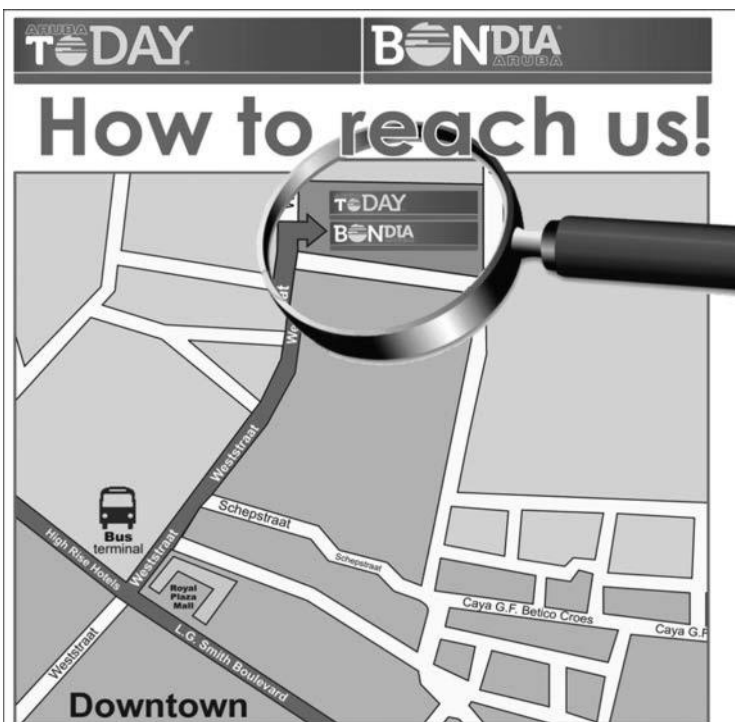
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS



Oscar-nominated docs take on hot-button U.S. social issues

Beverly Hills, United States

From racial tensions and school shootings to abortion and the prison system, this year's Oscar-nominated documentary short and feature films are taking a hard look at American society. Several of the nominated filmmakers told AFP ahead of the March 15 gala in Hollywood that they hoped their work would spark debate.

They also were glad for the visibility that an Academy Award nomination brings, as documentaries are often independently made and rarely get the same exposure as big-budget features. "I believe all art is political, and art is the vanguard of the revolution," Geeta Gandbhir, whose "The Perfect Neighbor" is competing for best documentary feature, told AFP.

The film, on Netflix, delves into the thorny collision of race, firearms and so-called "Stand Your Ground" laws as a dispute in a Florida neigh-

borhood turns fatal. "When you look at all my colleagues who are nominated in these categories, the films are deeply political," Gandbhir said.

"They all have something to say... about a pressing issue in some way," added the filmmaker, a double nominee with "The Devil Is Busy" competing for best documentary short.

That film, made in Atlanta, focuses on an abortion clinic beset by protesters after the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022 eliminated the federal constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy.

Gandbhir's co-director Christalyn Hampton said they hoped to "humanize the hot-button topic" by focusing on a religious woman who runs security at the clinic.

The woman finds herself trying to manage the delicate balance of protecting patients and confronting demonstrators who, in some cases, are driven by beliefs that reflect her own.

"We felt like it was a very interesting and ironic twist," Hampton said.

She added that the filmmakers hoped their work could help women "start to advocate for themselves and their health care, and not to get bogged down in

the policies and what politicians say they should do."

- 'Human issue' -

Director Joshua Seftel and journalist Steve Hartman sought to put a face on school

shootings for everyday viewers when they go to school."

Hartman said he hoped that seeing those empty spaces would help audiences understand the void left when a child is killed, and "feel that loss" so that progress could be made.

Using a similar approach, Andrew Jarecki and Charlotte Kaufman lifted the lid



U.S. director Christalyn Hampton documentary short "The Devil Is Busy" is nominated for Best Documentary Short Film, poses during a photo session ahead of the 98th Oscars Nominees Luncheon at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California on February 10, 2026.

shootings for everyday viewers when they made the documentary short "All the Empty Rooms."

To illustrate the epidemic, the pair visited the empty bedrooms of the children and youths killed by assailants.

"It's not a political issue, it's a human issue," Seftel told AFP.

"This is about something we all agree on, which is that we all want our kids to be safe

on American prisons with documentary feature "The Alabama Solution."

"We have two million people incarcerated, so you can't really avoid it," Jarecki told AFP at a luncheon for Oscar nominees.

"But the prisons do everything they can to keep the press out, to keep filmmakers out."

Jarecki said filmmakers could help foster change

by taking on tough subjects. "Understanding and being able to see what (an issue) really is is the first step to fix it," he said.

- Attacks on the press -

The role of journalists in society, and the increasing threats they face in some places, is the subject of "Armed Only with a Camera: The Life and Death of Brent Renaud," the first US reporter killed after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. "Sadly, we have now reached a point where -- according to the Committee to Protect Journalists -- it is the most deadly time on record to be a journalist," his brother and the film's director, Craig Renaud, told AFP.

Producer Juan Arredondo said the team hoped the film would raise awareness about the dangers faced by journalists everywhere, and not just those covering armed conflicts abroad.

"I think we have come into a time where what we have been covering for many years abroad is coming to the United States," he said, referring to increased attacks on and arrests of media professionals.

Arredondo said he hoped that audiences would "realize the importance of journalism." □



Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
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Editors

Pilar Flores

Richard Brooks

Angenette Figueroa

Oriana Geerman

Sales

Mark Gomes

Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

W: www.arubatoday.com

@ArubaTodayNews

Paris fashion week defies international shadow of war



Paris, France

Paris fashion week maintained its schedule on Tuesday, despite the shadow cast by the Middle East war, with film stars and directors watching Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent shows. Singer and designer Phar-

rell Williams, actor Isabelle Adjani and Spanish director Pedro Almodovar joined socialites and influencers at Jonathan Anderson's latest show for Dior which was held in the Tuileries gardens in central Paris. Despite the spreading US-

Israel conflict with Iran, there would be "no cancellations and no modifications" to the week, said Pascal Morand, executive president of the FHCM haute couture federation, the organisers.

His federation remained "very attentive of the situation, in contact with the prefecture," he told AFP ahead of the start of events.

Dior and Saint-Laurent were the star turns on the first main day of the week of displays for autumn/winter wear.

Irishman Anderson's second show for Dior since his move there last year was inspired by impressionist painter Claude Monet's "Water Lilies" for the outfits and the display that was held over a pond

in the Paris park.

A glass covered promenade was built across the pond to act as a catwalk.

Jeanne Le Bault, fashion editor for Marie Claire magazine, called the show "a collection that celebrates the Dior heritage while making it fresher, more fluid and inspired by nature".

Tuxedos for women and dark lace dominated Anthony Vaccarello's show for Saint Laurent, which drew Charlotte Gainsbourg and K-pop singer Rose.

To mark his 10 years at the firm, the 44-year-old Belgian showed off his love of lace, though in few colours, with top model Bella Hadid among those on the catwalk. □



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Aaron Judge and U.S. stars eye Japan revenge in World Baseball Classic

Miami, United States

A U.S. "dream team" led by Aaron Judge will seek revenge against Shohei Ohtani's defending champions Japan in the World Baseball Classic, as the sport's premier international competition begins Thursday.

The two-week tournament's sixth edition features 20 teams in games spread across Japan, Puerto Rico and the mainland United States, with the semi-finals and final to be played in Miami.

The last edition in 2023 saw Japan edge the US in a nail-biting thriller for a record third crown, and this year's American captain Judge has gathered an impressive roster of top MLB stars in a bid to reclaim the title.

"To get a chance to represent your country, and just be out there wearing the red, white and blue, see everybody with American flags in the stands -- it's gonna be incredible," said Judge.

"I've talked to a lot of the guys on the team. They're juiced up. They're excited."

The Yankees slugger and 2025 MVP will be joined in a star-studded offense by the



(L-R) Byron Buxton #25, Kyle Schwarber #12, Roman Anthony #3 and Aaron Judge #99 of Team USA walk from the field during a workout at Papago Park Sports Complex on March 02, 2026 in Phoenix, Arizona.

only two Americans who hit more home runs than him in the MLB last season -- Cal Raleigh and Kyle Schwarber. Short stop Bobby Witt Jr., who led the league in hits, and Bryce Harper will also feature with the bat.

But it is on the pitching side that the US is most improved from previous classics, with Paul Skenes and Tarik Skubal -- the two most recent Cy Young Award winners -- tak-

ing the mound.

They will have plenty of backup from the likes of All-Stars Joe Ryan and Logan Webb.

Team USA have only won the WBC once, in 2017. They open with group stage games in Houston against Brazil, Great Britain, Italy and Mexico, and will be managed by Mark DeRosa for the second consecutive tournament.

- Samurai Japan -

The World Baseball Classic has been building momentum since it replaced the now-defunct Baseball World Cup as the sport's biggest international tournament more than a decade ago. But it reached new heights in 2023, when Ohtani dramatically stepped up to the mound and struck out U.S. captain Mike Trout in the ninth inning to clinch Japan's

third WBC victory.

The fairytale final was watched by a whopping 29 million people in Japan -- despite airing on a weekday morning -- plus five million Americans.

Ohtani, still managing his return to the mound after a near two-year absence due to injury, will not pitch for Samurai Japan in the upcoming classic.

But the two-way, back-to-back World Series-winning superstar will be joined by his Dodgers teammate Yoshinobu Yamamoto, who was MVP in the Dodgers' 2025 World Series victory.

"I feel a great sense of responsibility to represent Japan again," Yamamoto said in January.

"We want to come together and aim for the title," he added.

Other MLB players include Seiya Suzuki of the Chicago Cubs, Munetaka Murakami of the Chicago White Sox and Kazuma Okamoto of the Toronto Blue Jays.

Japan's group games will be played at the Tokyo Dome against South Korea, Australia, Taiwan and Czechia. Games will be shown in Japan exclusively on Netflix. □

Murray scores 45 as Nuggets hold off Jazz

Los Angeles, United States

Jamal Murray scored 45 points as the Denver Nuggets held off the struggling Utah Jazz to snatch a 128-125 victory on Monday. Nuggets point guard Murray drained eight three-pointers and shot 13-of-19 from the field in a back-and-forth duel that saw the lead change hands no fewer than 22 times.

Murray's virtuoso performance was backed by 22 points from Nikola Jokic, who also pulled down 12 re-

bounds, on a night when all of Denver's starters reached double figures.

The win lifted Denver to 38-24 in the Western Conference standings, while Utah fell to 18-43 and remain one place off the bottom. Elsewhere Monday, Giannis Antetokounmpo returned from a five-week injury absence but could not prevent the Milwaukee Bucks slumping to a hefty 108-81 defeat to the Boston Celtics.

Antetokounmpo, making his first appearance since

suffering a right calf strain in late January, finished with 19 points and 11 rebounds in a losing effort against the outclassed Bucks.

Boston meanwhile kept up their pursuit of the Detroit Pistons at the top of the Eastern Conference with a potent all-round offensive effort. All five starters finished in double digits for the Celtics, while Payton Pritchard produced an eye-catching 25-point cameo off the bench that included five three-pointers.

The Celtics drained 20-of-



Kevin Durant #7 of the Houston Rockets shoots against Justin Champagnie #9 and Julian Reese #15 of the Washington Wizards during the first half at Capital One Arena on March 2, 2026 in Washington, DC.

50 from outside the arc, with Derrick White and Sam

Hauser bagging four three-pointers apiece. □



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World Cup tickets: Huge demand and sky-high prices

Washington, United States

From almost \$900 for the opening game to over \$8,000 for the final, match tickets are far from cheap for the World Cup which begins in North America in 100 days. AFP Sport assesses the cost of attending games at the tournament:

- How many tickets, how much demand? -

According to world football's governing body FIFA, almost seven million tickets have

been made available in total. Each person can buy a maximum of four tickets per match and a total of 40 for the whole competition.

Around two million tickets were sold during an initial lottery in October. A second sales phase in December and January was also a lottery and attracted a record 508 million requests, according to FIFA.

It has not said how many tickets have been attributed but the matches in highest

demand were the Group K finale between Colombia and Portugal in Miami on June 27, co-hosts Mexico against South Korea in Guadalajara on June 18, and the final at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on July 19.

- Prices skyrocket... -

There will be a total of 104 matches played at this expanded World Cup, the first ever to feature 48 teams, and ticket prices have soared for the most in-de-



A FIFA World Cup trophy is displayed at the Akron Stadium, where it arrived as the second part of its tour in Zapopan, Mexico on February 28, 2026.

mand games. Fan group Football Supporters Europe said the North American bid had initially promised tickets would be available from as little as \$21, but instead the cheapest tickets to go on sale have been for \$60, for example for the Group J opener between Austria and Jordan at the Levi's Stadium in California.

Most tickets cost at least \$200 for matches involving leading nations, while the cheapest tickets for the final cost \$2,000 and the best seats \$8,680 -- that is before taking into account FIFA's official resale site, where one category three seat for the game at the MetLife Stadium on July 19 was being advertised for an eye-watering \$143,750, over 41 times its original face value of \$3,450. FIFA president Gianni Infantino insists ticket prices are simply a consequence of the huge demand. "In the U.S. in particular there is this thing called dynamic pricing, meaning the prices will go up or down", depending on the match in question, he said.

Having faced sustained criticism over prices, FIFA announced a cheaper category of tickets, but those seats available for \$60 were reserved for fans of qualified teams and would make up just 10 percent of each na-

tional federation's allotment. FIFA has also put on sale packages combining match tickets with access to VIP lounges. For France against Senegal in New Jersey on June 16, those packages cost between \$2,900 and \$4,500.

- ...And keep rising -

FIFA is keeping aside an unspecified number of tickets which it will make available from April until the end of the tournament "on a first come, first served basis". Then there are the resale platforms, including FIFA's own official site. But this controversial fan-to-fan market allows resellers to determine prices themselves, hence the huge price advertised for a final ticket.

The resale market is unregulated in the United States and Canada. In Mexico, reselling a ticket above face value is prohibited, but only when the ticket is purchased in Mexico using the local currency.

A "category three" seat -- the highest section of the stands -- for the tournament's opening game between Mexico and South Africa at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium on June 11 was recently listed at \$5,324, compared to an original price of \$895. Other sites such as SeatGeek and StubHub were selling tickets at slightly lower prices. □

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